

TRENDS OF FACEBOOK USE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Facebook has been adapted as a platform for connecting with friends, sharing information, a favorite past time, and a way of new entertainment by much of the youth in Pakistan. Over 12 million people in Pakistan, half of whom fall between the ages of 18 to 30, use Facebook. This study aims to investigate the Trends of Facebook uses among students in universities of Pakistan. A qualitative study conducted for this purpose and three focus group discussions have been conducted involving postgraduate students from three different universities in Pakistan, who are using Facebook more than 2 hours daily. Findings from thematic analysis shows that most of the students are of the view that they are using Facebook for social interactions, information sharing/seeking, entertainment, pass time and to stay in touch with old friends and searching for new friends. Moreover result shows that students are using Facebook for relaxation after their hectic life routine and in boring classes.

Key Words: Facebook, Trends, Social interactions

INTRODUCTION

The wonder of social networking sites (SNSs) has been rising in popularity (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). SNSs establish a form of computer-generated community, with network sites such as Facebook and Myspace commanding worldwide following. For instant, Facebook report in Excess of more than 100 million users monthly (Johnson, 2009, Facebook.com, 2014). Nevertheless, whereas SNSs are flattering one of the major important areas of research in the communication field, institutes ignoring the speed with this instant growth (Beer, 2008).

The nature of connecting on Facebook and the benefits of its uses and many other aspects are becoming the major focus by the researchers and identity creation, and management (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Liu, 2008; Tong et al., 2008; Walther et al., 2008; Boyd, 2007; Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Doster, 2008; Fraser & Dutta, 2008; Boyd, 2007).

Objectives

1. What are the uses of Facebook by university students?
2. What are the needs they are fulfilling from using Facebook?

ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS

Online social networks are adding together to the online communication foundations that are affecting the human lives from all sides of life (Jalalian, Latiff, Hassan, Hanachi & Othman, 2010). The use of Internet in connecting people world widely has increased dramatically since the innovation of social networks. In the same lines, Nielsen Company Report (2009) claimed that Internet users spending their 17 percent time by using social networking sites.

According to Gibs (2008), that the dramatically increase of Internet usage indicates the remarkable change in the way people view the purpose of internet use. Social media facilitate users to create a profile on any social site and access to a list of users whom they want to connect to on Internet. They can also view and traverse their own list of friends and sometimes those made by others within the system (Nasir et al., 2012).

Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites on the Internet, boosting over 100 million active users (Facebook.com; Social bakers, 2014). Facebook has been an explosive social phenomenon studied by many researchers, from its use in politics, in meeting, its uses and effects in the workplace and its classroom applications (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009; Barney, 2008; Bonds-Raacke & Raack, 2010; Barker, 2008; Arogon, 2007; Backer, 2010; Baran, 2010).

Different studies have been conducted by the researchers to see the influence of Facebook on young generation and it provided the evidence that Facebook has great impacts on different aspects of their life (Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, (2010).; Fogg & Lizawa, 2008; Heino, 2006; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Muise, 2009; Smith, 2010). Facebook is providing a new channel for students to connect to the world within no time. They not only build new connections but also accelerate already formed relations by

using this platform. The response of students towards using Facebook shows that they are in search of such outlets, which provide them the facility of interactive communication and also improve their social skills, that has been made possible with the advent of Facebook. According to Social bakers (2014), Facebook.com (2014), more than one billion users are using Facebook and more than half of the active users are youngsters. They are being hooked over their computers or mobiles.

Eldon (2010) is of the view, which discussions about Facebook are apparently strong but the numbers of users are increasing rapidly. In the same lines, Muise (2009) stated that 70% of the total users of Facebook are addicted and this generation is known as millennial. Moreover, students belonging to age group of (18-30 years old) actively use Facebook and their ratio have been increasing gradually, (74%) yearly that is higher than any other age group.

Facebook is very important for students in United States for their academic purposes (comScore, 2007; Needham & Company, 2007). For instant, Florida University is using Facebook for academic purposes and online teachings and learning, similarly University of Michigan is using Facebook for the distribution of news and to remain in touch with its graduates (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Cassidy, 2006; Needham & Company, 2007; Schwartz, 2009; Selwyn et al., 2008).

Facebook is being extremely used by the university students because it provide them a platform for improving cognitive, social competencies, a positive attitude towards learning and to develop communication skills with the lecturer, outside the class (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Pasek & Hargittai, 2009; Selwyn, 2009; Ross et al., 2009).

Yu, Tian, Vogel, & Chi-Wai Kwok (2010) are of the view, that generally students think that the use of social media like Facebook is an easy and vital way to obtain knowledge, social acceptance and power, that has ability to guide them to higher levels of self-esteem, being skill full, and satisfactions in university life.

Similarly, Chu and Meulemans (2008), stated that the majority of students are using Facebook to communicate with other students for their courses, assignments, lectures. In addition, Bosh (2009), stated that majority of students is using Facebook to be part of discussion in different groups more than university sites. Moreover, Bosh (2009), is of the view that Facebook possibly can be used as educational tool, for group work and discussions.

The four themes have been taken from literature Following are those four themes that will be discussed,

1. Social interactions
2. Information seeking/sharing
3. Pass time
4. Entertainment

Explanation of these themes is in following paragraphs

Social Interaction

After reviewing the literature, using social media to communicate to other people is defined as social interaction. This theme derives from the Ko et al., (2005) study on duration spending on online websites and motivations to interact with other people and their scale “meeting people with my interest” and “keep up with what is going on” are

somewhat similar with social interaction. Similarly, social motivation, interpersonal utility, and companionship from literature have same categories (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999; Papacharssi & Rubin, 2000; Palmgreen & Taybur, 1979). Whiting and Williams (2013) stated that it is preferred to use term of social interaction because it is narrowed from interpersonal utility but wider than friendship.

Information Seeking

The literature is showing that using the social media for seeking any type of information or to use it for self-education is called information seeking. Similarly, Korgaonkar and Wolin are of the view, that using social media for self-education and information in terms of information motivation can be information seeking (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Pass Time

Title of this theme derives from the Palmgreen & Rayburn's (1979) study on using television for occupying the time. Papacharssi & Rubin (2000), also had similar construct call pass time during investigating a research "internet motives". Using social media to "kill the time" and "nothing have to do better" such type of statements they have in their scale.

Entertainment

Palmgreen and Rayburn (1979), and Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) both had item in their scale. Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999) also had dimension escapism. They defined escapism as pleasure, enjoyable, and having fun.

METHODOLOGY

Research conducted by using a qualitative study with the help of available literature on uses and gratifications and its association with social media. This qualitative study consisted on 3 focus group interviews of university students from three universities in Pakistan namely Quaid-E-Azam University, National University of Modern Languages, and Agricultural University of Faisalabad. Each group consists of 6 to 8 university students' age ranging 18-30 years. The focus group interviews were designed to extract response in terms of the uses and gratifications of Facebook. Questions were asked such as why they use Facebook, what they enjoy by using Facebook, how much time they spend in using Facebook, and what are the needs they are gratifying by using Facebook, A total of 22 university students participated in these focus group interviews. Each focus group interview was 30 to 40 minutes long and gender breakdown was 52% female and 48% male.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated the phenomena of using Facebook and fulfilled needs by using Facebook among top three research and quality base universities in Pakistan. The data. The qualitative comments of participants were analyzed by using thematic analysis. Initial, the researchers developed a list of uses and gratifications from the guidelines of Palmgreen and Rayburn (1979), Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999), Papacharissi and Rubin (2000), and Ko et al., (2005). After developing the scale, the researcher read out all the comments and transcribed. Throughout the focus group interviews, the researcher found diverse and wide-range of comments, why university students use Facebook and many of the reasons they are gratifying by using this medium. After transcriptions and reading the student's comments, the researcher sorted a list of uses and gratifications of using Facebook. After discussing with participants of focus groups regarding their comments and sorted list of themes, the researcher concluded on 5 uses and gratifications.

The themes will be reviewed under the following paragraphs:

Social Interactions

After concluding the comments of participant's dominant use of Facebook in Pakistan is Social interaction (95%), Participants stated that they are using Facebook for social interactions. They mentioned, "Facebook is the best source of interactions and socialization" they are of the view that "they can have more friends from all over the world without any border". It indicates "they have much better social life after the invention of Facebook". Students reported that they can have a better way to connect with wide-range of new friends, old friends, family or family friends, even they can connect with celebrities, co-workers and partners, like Dunne, Lawlor, Rowley (2010) mentioned in their results that students are using social networking sites like Facebook to be interconnected and more friending. Before social media networks, it was not possible to know the previous activities; Facebook provides person's profile, interest, activities and all other information that can help a person to be a friend or not to be a friend just after one click. Facebook also provides a platform for promoting their ideas and having followers like one of the participants said that "Facebook made me celebrity and now I have more than 2000 followers on my profile just because of sharing my pictures and videos on my timeline, it is my world" the results from Zaremohzzabieh, Samah, Omar, Bolong, & Kamarudin, (2014) is also supporting this finding with the statement it is a great way of students for uploading and sharing unlimited pictures and videos. It is not possible for female students to stay in-touch with their male teachers and friends because of the culture but now Facebook made it possible and eliminate the discrimination of gender-based communication and providing many of facilities to cope up with university problems. Similarly, female teacher cannot always stay on phones for their students and to reply them and they are not allowed to communicate with male students in their homes according to traditions. Facebook has come up with the solution and provide them a public platform where they can communicate publically by having group pages or group chats. Most of girls mentioned that they could have friendship with boys and talk to them without any embarrassments of being rejecting.

Information Seeking/Sharing

A finding shows that a large number of Participants are using Facebook, for searching different information (92%). Students said, “They can find information about new inventions and human research”. These observations are supporting the comments of students where they mentioned Facebook is helping them to learn the Fashion and different cultures from this global village. The finding from the study of Dunne, Lawlor, Rowley (2010) is many of the students are using social networking sites such as Facebook for information seeking and sharing with the participant’s statements “to see what is new in other’s life”. Students are of the view, that now they are viewing everyone in their profiles and activities that what is new and what is the progress of previous by seeing uploaded pictures, videos, comments and timeline statuses. In earlier times people use to have pen friendship that was not easy and as quick as nowadays. This statement is reflecting singer’s (1998), observation that internet is useful to empower individuals by providing them information and enabling them to generate and share information which they want. They signify that “Facebook made it easy to spread your event’s information and updates about events”. Similarly they imply that “Facebook is their new notice board and online business promotional agent”. It is also helping them to come up with many other problems like “if we can not access to any research article we can find it after posting on Facebook” with the help of social media friends. Many of students said they are using Facebook to get information for university assignments and official notices, this statement is mirroring the Boyd & Ellison, (2007) observations that University of Michigan using Facebook for the distribution of news and to be in-touch with graduated students. Similarly, respondents stressed the usage for getting educational information from Facebook that is same with results of Boyd & Ellison, (2007), Whiting & Williams (2013), they stated that, students are using Facebook for solving the math problems and learning new things from online teachings.

Pass Time

There is a visible number in the results that Participants are using Facebook for Passing time/ Killing (87%). Participants stated that they use Facebook “when we have noting to do” and some of the view “during load shedding because at that time we can not do anything that’s why we turn on our mobile for using Facebook”. Moreover, students said they come to Facebook when they are bored “I use Facebook when class or lecture is boring”. This observation is reflecting the observation of Dunne, Lawlor, Rowley (2010) that students are using social network means when they have nothing to do at home or university. A participant said that is log on Facebook when my friends are not around and when I am traveling because in public transport a female can not talk with strangers so at that time I use to divert my attention and start using Facebook, it is not a big problem if your friend is not talking with you at same time but we can do a lot of things on Facebook such as commenting on pictures, watching videos, updating status and videos, even I can capture daily life experience because almost everyone has smart devices so we can capture and record good and bad all moments and pass out our time. The shortage of electric power is one of the major problems in Pakistan during load shedding of electricity so we can not do anything during that time so we log on to Facebook and start

killing that time with chatting, commenting, talking friends, scrolling news feeds, searching new friends, talking to strangers and do many other thing like playing games and searching amazing places because at that time they have nothing to do because of shutdown of electric power.

Entertainment

The results also have a number of Participants who are using Facebook for entertain themselves (78%),“Facebook changes the meaning of entertainment”. Individuals said that “Facebook is the new era entertainment and it is better than earlier”. Moreover, they said “we can enjoy music, sharing pictures, commenting and that makes them laugh, online gaming is the best part of Facebook entertainment, watching friends how they are present themselves online, entertain them”. The observation of Dunne, Lawlor, Rowley (2010) about Facebook as tool of entertainment is supporting the comments of participants “we are using Facebook to entertain ourselves in many ways at the same time” before social networks such as Facebook it was not easy to do job as well as having entertainment at same time in office and home even bus, train, anywhere, participant’s comment “I can play games while I am in bathroom” is showing the craze of playing games. He also mentioned that before Facebook it was not easy for him to take part in any sport because of hectic timetable of school, college, and university and also job but now I can have entertainment whenever I want and wherever I wish to have entertainment. This finding is interrelated with the results of Boyd & Ellison, (2007), Whiting & Williams (2013), they are of the view that students are using Facebook for having entertainment. Many students emphasized that sharing video, reading comments, giving comments, uploading crazy pictures, following friends profile, watching funny pictures of friends provide them entertainment this statement is getting support from the study of Boyd & Ellison, (2007), Whiting & Williams (2013), Dunne, Lawlor, Rowley (2010), sharing videos, commenting, following people, searching for celebrities and creating fun with people’s pictures and uploaded status and playing games are the sources of entertainment for students.

Relaxation

Some of the participants raise an interesting comments for another use of Facebook in their life they mentioned that “using Facebook take them away from daily hectic life routine and provide them relaxation”. They also mentioned “going through Facebook profile make them relax because good memories we have spent can be visited again and again”. Student’s comments indicate that how quickly Facebook take them away from all bad happenings after visiting funny friends, family members timeline or watching funny videos and pictures makes them relax. A notable number of participants are using Facebook for escapism and release of boredom. A participant mentioned, “Whenever I am tense I use to log on Facebook, update my status and start sharing with friends which helps me to come out from bad situations” the findings from the previous studies support these comments in many ways like, Whiting & Williams (2013), Dunne, Lawlor, Rowley (2010) stated in their studies that Facebook is providing a platform to its users for relaxation and relief from daily hard and bored routine. Similarly, Boyd &

Ellison, (2007) observation is reflecting the participant's comment "it takes us away from this world to, our world, where we have control enough" that is helping them to release their tensions and tiredness of normal life.

CONCLUSION

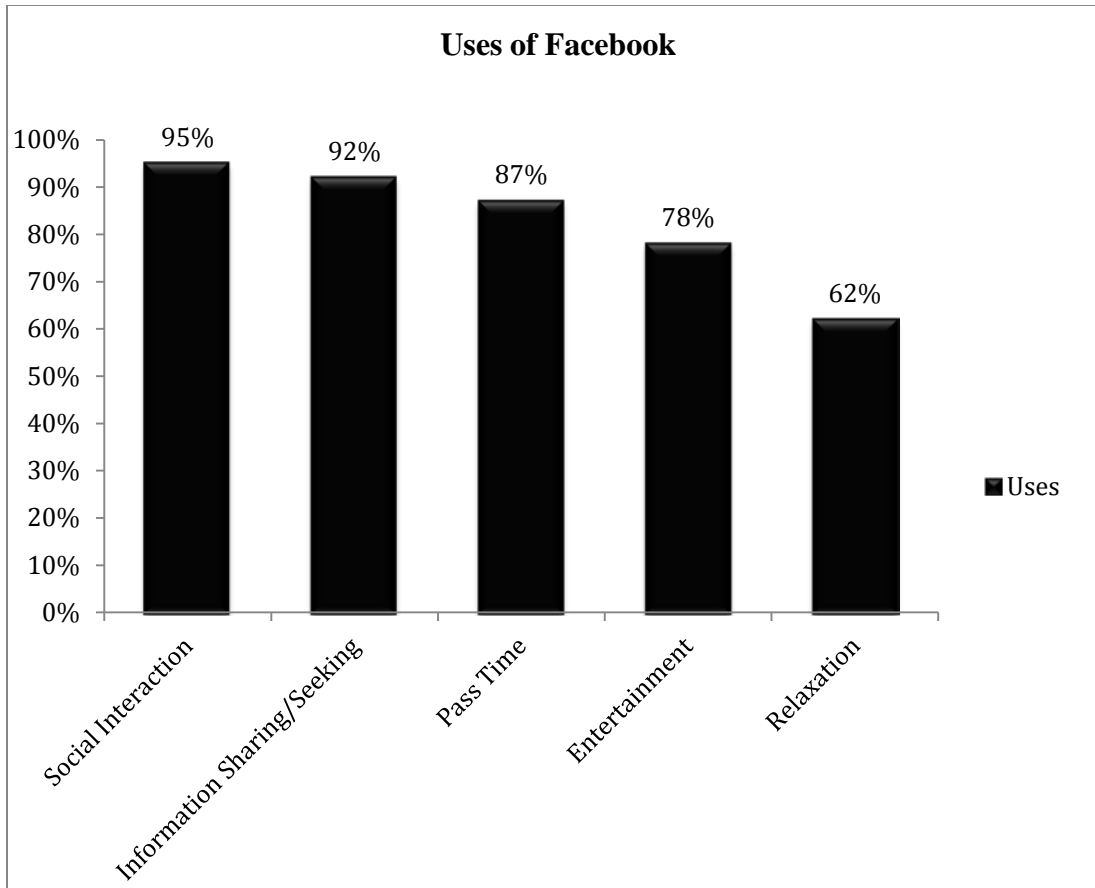
Facebook is rapidly growing phenomenon, with dramatically increasing numbers of daily visitors are showing these sites have much influence on their daily life (Fraser and Dutta, 2008). However, the definite lack of academic research on this issue (Beer, 2008). Precisely, there is a meager body of experimental research affecting to an examination of the possible application of uses and gratifications in an online connected context (Dunne, Lawlor, Rowley, 2010). For instance, Grant's (2005) research on young people's relationship with online marketing, and Raack and Bonds-Raacke's (2008) application of uses and gratifications in the context of social networking sites (Dunne, Lawlor, Rowley, 2010).

This paper explores the importance of uses and gratifications of Facebook with the respect of uses and gratifications theory. The application of this theory on Facebook helps to explain the varied reasons of using Facebook. The findings of the research from focus group interviews from university students provide a clear understanding of using Facebook and how they are gratifying their needs by using Facebook.

The result indicates 5 uses of using Facebook by university students. These 5 uses and gratifications are Social interaction is the most dominated use for Facebook and fulfilling the needs to be in touch with family, friends, new friends, and socialization. Information seeking/sharing is the second most important use of university students because it provides different sources of information and capable to share information to targeted people as well as common public. Pass time is also significant use of Facebook by university students and that is helping them to spend their time by sitting at one place that can be office, station, home, bus, even when everything is shut due to shortage of electric power. Entertainment is one of the good, quick and short term use of Facebook by university students, they mentioned that before this it was very difficult for them to spare time during university class to entertain themselves and watch movie and share pictures of their best moments and watch movies and to avoid the boring lectures during class but using Facebook is making it possible at very cheap price, even mostly free of cost. most important is, without taking too much time and efforts to travel or buy something. Relaxation is the last but not the least use of Facebook several students emphasize the use of Facebook for relaxing them in different ways like to go through from their profile and look back in good times which makes them relax and being the source of encouragement for fighting with bad time which they are suffering. Like some of participants mentioned that "it takes us in our good times we can enjoy our childhood, and all those moments which can be the source of relaxation" this statement is reflecting the proclamation of Facebook.com (2014) that Facebook is providing a place to save you good and bad times by uploading pictures, videos, comments, and uploading statuses.

The contribution of this research is to extent the literature many ways. First, this paper shows the specific relevance of uses and gratifications theory with social media (Facebook) to academic and practitioners in communication and marketing fields. Second, qualitative design for this research provides rich and vibrant understanding of the

uses of Facebook and what type of needs they are gratifying by using this form of media. Finally, This paper provides the wealth of knowledge for both academic and business researchers about the ever-expanding world of social media.



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